

Jail Management System Saves Staff Time and Serves Many

THE HAMILTON COUNTY Sheriff's Department, in Cincinnati, Ohio, began a planning process in 1992 to replace its existing main-frame-based inmate tracking system with a PC client/server system. Information available through the old computer system was limited to inmate demographics, charges and holds, court dates, outdates, and history of housing moves. Access was limited almost exclusively to the records department.

The primary goals of developing a new system were to:

- Provide the information necessary to manage the corrections system,
- Capture the necessary information only once and have it readily available wherever it is needed, including JMS workstations and outside agencies doing business with the jail,
- Reduce reliance on the movement of paperwork, and
- Allow for a more effective identification of inmates by providing mugshots throughout the system.

One of the main objectives of the new system was to reduce staff by eliminating duplicate data entry. This was necessary because the division was being required to begin capturing data that it had not entered previously. Thus, the switch to the new system did not actually reduce staff positions, but the staff time saved was re-allocated to the entry of new data required to provide additional information for managing the system.

The new Jail Management System (JMS) provides previously unavailable information on:

- The classification of inmates and available housing locations,
- Inmate and officer assaults,
- Changes in the number and types of inmates coming into the system,
- All inmate events, and
- Many other modules that support the business process.

Two other components of the system, its interfaces with outside agencies and a unique program called Jail

Help, have also allowed staff resources to be reallocated to more critical functions.

JMS IS AN INTEGRATED client/server system running on a local area network and supporting the TCP/IP protocol. The network interconnects more than 200 in-house PC workstations, printers, and a database server. It supports a jail system consisting of approximately 2,000 inmates housed in five buildings and 600 employees. At the core of the JMS system is a comprehensive Oracle relational database that exploits the common data and business operations across multiple facilities. By virtue of its open system design, the system can independently support jail operations or operate as an integrated component of a larger enterprise solution.

JMS provides the full range of functionality found in the most sophisticated jail management systems. Functions integrated into the system include intake, property, classification, housing assignment, case management, sentencing, incident reporting, inmate movement, visitation, scheduling, and release. New technology also allows JMS to provide each inmate a wristband at admission that has a bar code with an assigned JMS number and an identity photo. These components are fully integrated and are supplemented by a workflow capability that assists users in performing their day-to-day activities.

By **JOE SCHMITZ**, Director of Corrections, Hamilton County Sheriff's Department, Cincinnati, Ohio.

JMS INTERFACES WITH

the county's criminal records database and several other systems. Use of the TCP/IP protocol permits access to the county's A-series mainframe computer that maintains a historical database, CLEAR, on every individual arrested in Hamilton County. JMS also interfaces with the Court Management System, an Oracle database. Both systems download information into JMS on a daily basis, either automatically or in response to an inquiry. CLEAR currently downloads demographics and in the near future will download all arrest information from the arresting officer's mobile data terminal. Several times a day, the Court Management System downloads into JMS all court dates and corresponding courtrooms for any inmate currently housed.

In addition to these two interfaces, JMS also interfaces with a mugshot and automated fingerprint system located in the Sheriff's Identification Section; "Cashless", an accounting system for inmate accounts; the county's welfare/human services data system; a statewide jail linkage; pretrial services; and the Social Security Administration. Access to JMS is provided to approximately 47 arresting agencies within Hamilton County, the Clerk of Courts, and the Public Defender's Office.

INMATES ALSO ACCESS

JMS. In addition to the functions typically required to manage a jail, JMS contains a revolutionary component called Jail Help. Jail Help gives inmates direct, but limited, access to the system and enables them to

retrieve frequently requested information without involving a correctional officer or other staff. Jail Help was developed as a component of the JMS to save staff time and reallocate staff resources to more critical tasks. The system consists of ATM-style machines located in the housing units that allow inmates to access the information they had typically gotten from corrections officers or other staff.

The Jail Help units are equipped with a bar code reader and a touch screen monitor encased in a stainless steel housing. The units are securely mounted to a wall or a support pillar, depending on the facility. The keyboard and CPU are secured in the locked stainless steel case and accessible only to the information systems staff. The inmate accesses Jail Help by scanning his/her bar code and following directions on the touch screen monitor.

Inmates can access their release date, current account balance, court data, and current day's schedule (excluding non-court, out-of-facility activities). Available court information includes criminal charge description, level of offense, section code, disposition, court dates, and sentence. Jail Help also allows the inmate to request dental, mental health, or sick call; work detail; enrollment in education classes; a visit from a chaplain, public defender, or social services; and retrieval of property. It includes a menu item called "Jail News" where an inmate can read jail rules and regulations, get directions for the

grievance process, or find information on new procedure changes.

Jail Help gives inmates "real time" information limited to frequently asked questions, thus eliminating the need for staff persons to use their time researching and answering most routine questions. Our jail system, like most, had previously depended on the officers and/or classification floor workers to handle inmate requests, which took up a large part of their day. Jail Help not only eliminates these tasks, it keeps inmates from asking the same questions from several different employees. Staff now have more time to spend on more critical functions such as security rounds and re-classification interviews.

OUR NEXT GOAL IS TO

provide the same information available through Jail Help, including bond amount, to the inmate's family through an Interactive Voice Recognition system. This will enable an inmate's family to retrieve information by phone directly from the database without any interaction with the Division's staff. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

*Joe Schmitz
Director of Corrections
Hamilton County Sheriff's
Department
1000 Sycamore Street, Room 120
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
(513) 946-6606*